Rhode Island Mercury Advisory Working Group
Mercury Commission Sub-Group on Auto Parts

Meeting Minutes from August 18, 2004
2:00-4:00 pm
RI DEM, Conference Room B

Attendees:

Chairwoman Sheila Dormody (RI CWA), Elizabeth Stone (RI DEM), Terry Gray (RI DEM), Bev Migliore (RI DEM), Eugenia Marks (RI Audubon Society), Jamie Magnani (RILOCAT), Jack Hogan (Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers) and Paul D'Admao (Automotive Recyclers Association of Rhode Island)

Called to order by Sheila Dormody, Sub-Group Chair, at 2:05 pm.

Discussion of Agenda & September Report & Recent Legislative Activity

- Discussion of agenda for 8/18 meeting. Chairwoman Dormody asked if there are any suggested changes to the meeting agenda – none were offered.
- Discussion regarding the preparation of the commission's September interim report.
- Discussion of the House and Senate (S-3209 and H-8639) resolutions respectfully calling upon the Mercury Reduction Oversight Commission to address the issue of mercury in auto parts. Jack Hogan of the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers (AAM) pointed out that AAM did not take a position on these identical resolutions during the 2004 legislative session. However, their silence on the resolution during the legislative session should not be interpreted as support – the Alliance does have some concerns with some of the language in the resolution. (It was determined later in the meeting that the AAM represents approximately 90% of the car manufacturers distributing cars in the US today).
- A packet of preliminary background materials including an initial Resource List were distributed as the beginning of a compilation of materials to provide to the full group in our report.

Review/Discussion of the Magnitude of the Problem of Mercury in Automobiles

- Overview of the anatomy of a car – where can mercury be found. Examples of convenience lighting (which can contain mercury) were distributed for attendees to examine first hand.
- Discussion of the quantity of mercury found in convenience lighting and other car parts – amount can range from a "trace" to much more significant amounts. The group agreed on the summary from the Mercury in Vehicles Update which reports that "Historically, mercury has been used most in convenience lighting—trunk and hood lights—and anti-

lock brake applications. While these applications are being phased out, new uses, including mercury-vapor headlamps and backlit panel displays, have been introduced."

- Discussion about the auto manufacturers willingness and ability to remove mercury from cars. Mercury in cars is being phased away from traditional uses (e.g. switches) and into new components (e.g. headlights and LED screens). These newer uses need to be looked at just as closely as previous uses (such as switches) in cars reaching their end-of-life.
- Discussion of the challenges facing car manufacturers – specifically, the fact that manufacturers often do not manufacturer the various components they use in their own cars. Often times, automobile manufacturers do not know what specifically is in the components they're purchasing for their own use.
- Discussion of the number of registered cars in RI quantity of mercury being released in the environment from RI cars. According to the ARA, 10-11 million vehicles are retired each year. According to the AAM, 50,000 new cars are registered in Rhode Island each year.
- According to the Mercury in Vehicles Update, 890 pounds of mercury from auto switches has been released to the environment, and a similar amount remains in cars still on the road.

Discussion of Life Cycle of Automobiles (End-Of-Life)

- Paul D'Adamo (representing RI auto recyclers) presented a flow chart which explained the life cycle of a car (focusing on dismantling and disposal methods).
- Discussion of how and when mercury can be released into the environment during the dismantling/crushing/shredding procedure. Paul indicated that in his opinion, most mercury is released when automobiles go through the shredders (which happens domestically). He also pointed out that the smelting of the remaining metal from shredded cars often times happens outside the US borders.
- Discussion of the challenges of recycling mercury containing parts from automobiles (time, size, difficulty of removal, impact on profit margins). Auto recyclers are already required to remove the following items from vehicles prior to disposal: tires, anti-freeze, gas, batteries, freon, power/transmission fluid and motor oil.
- Bev Migliore from RI DEM provided some information regarding on-going efforts EPA has undertaken to address pollution problems at junkyards and auto recycling facilities. Do we know how many cars are junked in RI each year? No – would like to know this number.
- The state of Maine has developed a report on this topic.

Discussion of Successful Models for Collecting and Recycling Mercury Containing Auto Parts

- This following discussion acknowledged the use of mercury in a variety of auto parts, but focused particularly on convenience light switches.
- The trend seems to be moving towards having the auto recyclers taking the lead in actively removing and recycling mercury containing auto parts prior to shredding and final disposal. It was generally agreed that the auto recyclers should be the party responsible for removal of the switches. However, many of these components have no intrinsic value.

- Discussion of the challenges on this model – 1) cost to auto recyclers; 2) the wide variety of entities which call themselves auto recyclers (this group is not a uniform group of businesses), 3) lack on an "economic incentive" to remove mercury containing components; 4) the need to educate recyclers about mercury in cars; 5) need to educate new and used car dealerships about this topic; and 6) unusual link between DBR and DEM relative to the regulation and oversight of this business sector.
- It was suggested we try and gain a better understanding of what recyclers are already required to do with cars in order to remove all hazardous materials/fluids.
- The group agreed on the need for an economic incentive for auto recyclers to collect switches
- Discussion of existing/successful models for encouraging the removal of mercury added components from vehicles: 1) the Maine bounty program; or 2) adding an extra "environmental changes" onto disposal bills to help cover the cost of removal and disposal of mercury added car components. [Elizabeth Stone from DEM indicated she would look into possible existing "environmental charges" (through the Tax Code) that the auto repair industry might be currently levying on customers.
- It was suggested the group make every effort to look into other types of incentive programs that could be utilized to address the issue of mercury parts in cars. Maine's program is just one approach – the sub-group should explore all options (and keep lines of communication open) as the meetings progress.
- Discussion of the "degree of success" reaped by the Maine bounty program. Does this program connect removal with the right incentive?
- Discussion of auto manufacturers degree of responsibility for "end of life vehicles" or ELV's.
- Discussion of the diminishing use of Restricted Receipt accounts in RI state government.
- Resources on this topic include AAM's Maine compliance plan and first year report on their switch collection program.
- Jack agreed to provide information on auto mercury anatomy, AAM's view of the Maine program, and a post-participation analysis of the Maine program with recommendations.

Discussion of Future Meetings

- Next Meeting set for Wednesday September 8th at DEM (4th floor) @ 2:30 pm.
- Agenda items to include: potential for fees and costs for hazardous materials, Bev and Terry to summarize hard-to-dispose regulations

Adjournment:

Chairwoman Dormody adjourned the meeting at approximately 4:00 pm.

Recorded by:

Elizabeth S. Stone
RI DEM